UNITED
NATIONS

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United Nations
Conference
on Trade and
Development

Distr.
GENERAL

TD/B/COM.3/EM.5/1
7 July 1998

Original: ENGLISH

TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Commission on Enterprise, Business
Facilitation and Development
Expert Meeting on Clustering and
Networking for SME Development
Geneva, 2-4 September 1998
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND ANNOTATIONS

I. Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers

2. Adoption of the agenda

3. The role of support structure - public (ministries, regional governments and agencies) and private (e.g. business associations) - in promoting and sustaining clustering and networking for SME development, including policy responses to problems for SMEs in access to finance

4. Adoption of the outcome of the Meeting

GE.98-51057 (E)

II. Annotations to the provisional agenda

Item 1 Election of officers

It is recommended that the Expert Meeting elect a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman-cum-Rapporteur.

Item 2 Adoption of the agenda

The provisional agenda for the Meeting is in section I above. The draft schedule of meetings for the three days is attached to this document.

Documentation

TD/B/COM.3/EM.5/1 Provisional agenda and annotations

Item 3 The role of support structure - public (ministries, regional governments and agencies) and private (e.g. business associations) - in promoting and sustaining clustering and networking for SME development, including policy responses to problems for SMEs in access to finance

This Expert Meeting is being convened pursuant to a decision taken by the Commission on Enterprise, Business Facilitation and Development at its second session. The UNCTAD secretariat has prepared an issues paper entitled "Promoting and sustaining SME clusters and networks for development", which provides background information and raises critical issues for discussion by the experts.

The analysis and the case studies presented in the secretariat's paper suggest that clustering and networking are among the best options to support the growth of SME clusters and their ability to compete effectively in the global economy. They do so by creating collective efficiency, flexibility and linkages that support innovation and change at the firm level. While it may be difficult to replicate the dynamic model of industrial districts found in Europe, lessons learned from these experiences can be usefully applied in other contexts and countries. This may involve support for firms in spontaneously created regional clusters or the promotion of forms of clustering such as export processing zones, science parks and incubators.

A major challenge for developing countries is to use the "cluster approach" as a lever for local development. To meet this objective, each form of clustering will require deliberate policy actions and specific support structures. These include programmes targeting interfirm networks, vertical supply chains and sectoral clusters; efforts to enhance the role of intermediary institutions; and the stimulation of horizontal institutional networks among major economic and social actors through a participatory, demand-driven bottom-up approach. During the Expert Meeting, lessons will be drawn from well known success stories in developed and developing countries. Attention will be focused in particular on several attempts by developing countries to promote clustering and networking from informal to more organized and innovative phases.

Documentation

TD/B/COM.3/EM.5/2 "Promoting and sustaining SME clusters and networks for development"

Item 4 Adoption of the outcome of the meeting

The Expert Meeting is expected to adopt recommendations and conclusions at the end of its deliberations. The final report will be compiled under the authority of the Chairman after the conclusion of the Meeting.

Draft schedule of meetings

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
a.m. Plenary: Opening of the meeting Elections/agenda Informals: Substantive item 3	a.m. Informals (cont'd): Substantive item 3	a.m. Informals (cont'd): Consideration of draft outcome
p.m. Informals (cont'd): Substantive item 3	p.m. Informals (cont'd): Substantive item 3	p.m. Informals (cont'd): Consideration of draft outcome (cont'd) Plenary (closing) Adoption of the outcome

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